

# A PARIS MYSTERY

By the Author of "My Daughter and My Daughter"

(Continued from Sunday, November 10th.)

Of course, on the night of the 24th, I had left this place I wandered through the streets, striving in vain to banish the image of the ghostly figure from my mind. I could not shake it off; after going home I took a sleeping-draught, and found a respite in unconsciousness. Next day I was weak and feverish; next night I was again in the same state, in which I went through that whole scene of horror again. Monsieur the Judge will understand me when I say that for the time I was almost crazed by terror, and that I had eaten scarcely anything for three days helped to produce this effect. I was afraid to stir outside, afraid to face the light of day, so thoroughly had my four unnamed men. I did not leave my room after returning on the night of Monday until I left it yesterday under arrest. And this that I have told Monsieur the Judge is the truth, so far as I know it.

Q. You say that the dagger given you by the deceased was sold, several weeks after, to a dealer in curiosities in the Palais Royal. Do you recollect the dealer's name?

A. (After a pause) No, I cannot remember it. But the shop is on the right hand side of the garden, as you enter from the Place du Palais Royal.

Q. You have stated that the time when you entered this room on Monday night was half-past ten, or rather a few minutes after the half hour. Are you certain of that?

A. Yes, because I heard a church clock sound the half hour just as I entered the Passage de Mazarin.

Q. In what way and with whom did you spend the night of Monday?

A. I was till nearly 10 o'clock in the Cafe de la Source, with a friend; after that I saw for a few minutes another friend. Then, as I have already stated, I came here.

Q. You share your room in the Rue Dauphine with a student of law, named Marsal?

A. Yes.

Q. He left the room on the night of your arrest; do you know why?

A. He left because—because—

Q. Well?

A. Because he suspected me.

Q. He told you so?

A. I know it.

Q. You say that you feared to leave your room after returning home on the night of the murder; of what were you afraid?

A. I feared lest suspicion might in some way fall upon me; I do not seek to conceal it. The janitor Mouton, recalled and re-examined, stated that Meisner had many visitors, who came to see him on business. That he, Mouton, according to orders, always took up to Meisner the names of his visitors, who were afterward received or dismissed, as the case might be. Stated that Meisner had a wide connection among the students of the "left bank"—Parisian, provincial and foreign. Had often heard the students complaining loudly of the hardness of Meisner's terms, and expressing their disgust at his avarice.

Q. You are aware that the deceased Joseph Meisner had a nephew resident in Paris?

A. Yes.

Q. From his having visited his uncle here, in this house?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember when the last of those visits took place?

A. It was about a twelvemonth back.

Q. Did anything particular pass then, so as to fix this date in your memory?

A. Yes. Joseph Meisner called me in a loud voice to come upstairs; I did so.

Q. He was standing at the open door of his room; the young man, his nephew, was a step or two lower. They looked as if they had been quarrelling. Meisner was much flushed, and seemed excited; the young man was quiet, but one could perceive that he was agitated. Meisner spoke much louder than was usual with him. "Jean," he said to me, "you see this good-for-nothing fellow? If he comes back here you will refuse him admittance; if he persists, you will call the police. 'The insult is unnecessary,'" said the young man. "I shall not come back." Then he went downstairs quietly.

Q. And he never came back?

A. Not to my knowledge.

Q. You are certain he said nothing more than the words you have repeated?

A. I heard him say nothing more.

## CHAPTER VIII.

NOTES OF THE PRELIMINARY INQUIRY (CONTINUED).

Paul Marsal, student at law, interrogated, gave evidence as follows:

Q. You are the intimate friend of the accused, Raoul Girard?

A. For the last four years we have been inseparable.

Q. You frequently lived together, and were doing so at the time of this murder?

A. That is so.

Q. You were accustomed to discuss your private affairs quite freely together?

A. With perfect freedom.

Q. You were aware that your friend Girard had an uncle in Paris—Joseph Meisner, the money-lender?

A. I was aware that Girard had an uncle in Paris, but I did not know his name, or indeed anything about him, except that he was rich and miserly. We never talked of him; the subject was distasteful to Girard, and I avoided it.

Q. On the night of Monday, the 24th, you were along with Girard at the Cafe de la Source?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the subject of your conversation there?

A. We talked, among other matters, of our present want of means and the difficulty of raising money.

Q. Was the name of Girard's uncle mentioned in the course of that conversation?

A. No.

Q. Was any allusion made to him that evening?

A. Yes; I suggested that perhaps this rich uncle of Girard's might lend him some money.

Q. How was that suggestion received by Girard?

A. He said that it was quite useless to look for anything from that quarter.

Q. Did Girard, in your hearing, express any feeling of ill-will toward his uncle?

A. He expressed his strong disgust at the old man's avarice.

Q. Did he give utterance to any word or words expressing personal hatred—animosity?

A. It was impossible for Raoul to have a friendly feeling toward his uncle, after the treatment he had received from him.

Q. That is a negative statement. Did he express in words what you call an absence of friendly feeling?—did he threaten his uncle?

A. Certainly not.

Q. Did he apply to his uncle any epithet that might be called unfriendly?

A. (Given after a pause) I remember that he called his uncle a "cur," an epithet, I thought, well chosen.

Q. It is not your opinion, but Girard's words to you that I wish to ascertain. Was his expression of dislike confined to the use of this word "cur"?—Did nothing more pass be-

ween you on the subject? (Show the witness hesitated, and the question was repeated.)



"I remember he called his uncle a cur."

A. Raoul was excited; I attached no significance to what he said.

Q. That is not the point; you evade my question. Did Girard use the language of hatred with reference to his uncle, or did he not?

A. (Given after considerable hesitation) I believe he did say something to the effect that he hated his uncle, as he had good reason to do.

Q. You are here to give evidence, not to comment. Attend to this question: At what hour did you leave the Cafe de la Source?

A. At a little before ten o'clock.

Q. Did Girard accompany you home?

A. No, he left me at the top of the Rue Dauphine, saying that he meant to pay a visit.

Q. At what hour was that?

A. At 10 o'clock precisely; the bells of St. Sulpice sounded the hour as we parted.

Q. You see this dagger; have you seen it before?

A. I cannot say.

Q. How? You cannot say? Did you never see this dagger in the hands of Raoul Girard?

A. I have seen in his possession a weapon which was very like it.

Q. Exactly like it?

A. Yes.

Q. That dagger which you saw in Girard's possession had a sheath; can you describe it?

A. It was shaped, I remember, like a closed fan.

Q. Was this the sheath? (Here the witness was shown the sheath of the weapon belonging to M. de St. Florent.)

A. It might have been; it resembles it.

Q. When was it that you saw the dagger in Girard's possession?

A. (After a pause) I think about two years ago. I saw it one day lying on Raoul's table. I understood that it had been given him by his uncle to sell. I took it up to examine it, and said that it seemed valuable and would bring something.

Q. You saw it only that once?

A. Yes; I was not living with Girard at the time; I understood that he was going to sell it.

Q. But you do not know for a fact that he did so?

A. No.

Q. On the table in your room, No. 28 Rue Dauphine, there was found by the detective officer Py, on the night of Wednesday, the 26th, a newspaper, so folded that a paragraph relating to the crime lay uppermost, and a little heap of money; it was you placed those things there?

A. Yes.

Q. With what purpose?

A. To warn my friend that he was in danger.

Q. Then you suspected him?

A. I did so at that time. It was an unworthy suspicion, of which I am ashamed. I am now as certain of his innocence as of my own.

Gabrielle Dumaine, glove cleaner, Rue de l'Odéon, gave evidence: That she knew the accused Raoul Girard intimately; that she was his betrothed. Interrogated as to whether she had ever heard Girard speak of his uncle, (declared that she had, but very rarely. Thought she had been told Meisner's name, but knew nothing about him, except that he was rich and miserly, and had behaved very badly to her friend. Did Girard ever use the language of enmity in referring to his uncle? No; he spoke bitterly about the usage he had received, and that was all. But his language left the impression that he disliked his uncle. Oh, certainly; how could it be otherwise? Meisner had treated him shamefully.

Q. Did you ever see in Girard's possession a long dagger, with curious writing on the blade, and an oddly-shaped sheath?

A. Yes, I once saw such a dagger; Raoul visited us one day in passing, and showed it to us; it had been given him, he said, by his uncle a week or two before, and he was then on his way to sell it if he could find a purchaser.

Q. Was that long ago?

A. Yes; more than a year; perhaps two years; I cannot say precisely.

Q. Would you recognize this weapon and its sheath if they were shown you?

A. I think so.

Q. Is that the dagger? (Shown the poniard used in the murder.)

A. It is very like it; I remember the chrysanthemum flower on the blade.

Q. Is that the sheath? (Shown the sheath from M. de St. Florent's collection.)

A. I believe it is, or one exactly like it.

Q. What was the last occasion on which you saw the accused?

A. On Monday night, a little after ten, he tapped at the door of our shop in the Rue de l'Odéon, and I went to the door and spoke to him.

Q. How long did your conversation last?

A. Only a few minutes.

Q. Did he refer to his uncle at all during your interview?

A. Oh, no; we talked almost exclusively about the comedy which Raoul had sent to the Odéon.

Q. Did you observe anything peculiar in Girard's manner?

A. No, I did not; to me Raoul has always been the same.

Q. You do not think your conversation lasted more than five minutes?

A. I am certain it lasted no longer than that; Raoul would not come in, and it was snowing at the time.

Abel Lecommand, journalist, stated that he had been a colleague of Girard's on the staff of Le Petit Monde, a weekly journal now extinct. Remembered calling on Girard in company with his friend Tisson, and seeing on his (Girard's) table a dagger of Oriental workmanship, in a sheath made to imitate a closed fan. Had taken up the dagger and handled it, admiring the fine temper of the steel. The weapon now shown him (that found beside the dead body of Meisner), if not the one he had seen in Girard's possession, was at all events its very fac-simile. Could not say exactly when he had said this visit to Girard, but thought it must have been at least a couple of years ago.

Auguste Tisson, journalist, confirmed the evidence of the last witness. At the house No. 28 Rue Dauphine, born witness to the fact that Girard did not return home until after 10 o'clock on Tuesday morning, and that his coat sleeve was ripped up from the cuff to the shoulder.

James Cohen, money-lender, stated that he had known the deceased Joseph Meisner for over thirty years. Meisner was a man of eccentric and miserly habits. Remembered visiting him on one occasion, and passing on the stairs the accused, Raoul Girard, who had just left his uncle. On this occasion Meisner had complained bitterly to him (Cohen) of his nephew's conduct, saying that the young man was a seigneur, a rascal; that he had been forcing money on him; and that he (Meisner) would be ruined if this went on. Had heard Meisner say more than once that he expected to be murdered some day, for the sake of the treasure he kept in his room. Had advised Meisner to send the treasure to his bankers, but he had not done so; could not bear it to be out of his sight. When Meisner spoke of expecting to be murdered, it was without reference to any individual.

The Police Sergeant Garnier gave evidence, that, on the night of Monday, the 24th, he had been stationed in the Rue de Biche. Remembered that, while standing at the street corner, a man had passed him, walking very fast, in the direction of the Passage de Mazarin. The man was of middling height, and slimly made, wore a low-crowned hat, and a long coat. Confronted with the accused, declared that Girard's figure resembled that of the man whom he had seen. This was after ten o'clock; thought it must have been nearly half-past ten, but had an impression that the half hour had not yet struck. It might have been born only a quarter past; it might have been twenty minutes; could not say with certainty, but thought it was near the half hour.

Superintendent Ledru stated that he had made a careful examination of the court and exterior of this house, No. 13 Passage de Mazarin. Round three sides of the court was a trellis of stout wood, reaching to a distance of about two feet from the sills of the windows on the second floor. Beneath the window of Meisner's bed, the trellis bore marks as if some one had recently climbed up by it; the paint was scraped off, and here and there a spar had been cracked or broken. There were marks also on the sill of the cabinet window and footprints on the floor, showing that in this way an entrance had been gained to Meisner's room.

Q. In searching Meisner's room on the night of the murder, in what position did you find the key of the room door?

A. The key was found hanging on a nail near the door.

Q. In order to reach the cabinet window by means of the trellis work, would any special degree of agility be required?

A. In my opinion, a very special degree of agility would be required. I should consider it a feat of gymnastics.

The janitor Mouton, recalled and re-examined, stated that there was no duplicate key to any room in the house. It was Meisner's custom, when in his room, to hang his door-key on the nail where it had been found by the police. Had frequently seen it hanging there.

The Officer of Police Lambert stated that, according to instructions, he had walked at his fastest pace from the head of the Rue Dauphine to Mme. Dumaine's shop in the Rue de l'Odéon; thence by the Rue de la Conde and the Rue de Biche to the Passage de Mazarin. The time taken to cover this distance had been 13 minutes 29 seconds.

NOTE BY THE JUDGE OF INSTRUCTION.

"1. As to the time when the murder was committed.—The medical testimony goes to prove that the dagger wound from which Meisner died was inflicted at a late hour on Monday night. The occupant of the room next to Meisner's, Jules Bernet, the copyist, heard a dull, heavy noise, such as would be caused by the fall of the murdered man; he believes, was after 10 o'clock. The candle tapers upstairs by Meisner at 9 o'clock, shows the janitor Mouton, burnt out about an hour and a half. Meisner's body was found lying in front of his writing table; on the table were sheets of paper scrawled over with unfinished calculations; he had been working at these when suddenly stabbed from behind; his pen was found on the floor. The candle, therefore, was still burning when the fatal blow was struck; consequently, if Mouton's statement be accepted, the murder was committed before 10.30.

"2. As to Girard's connection with the affair.—Here we have an uncle notoriously rich, a nephew notoriously poor. We have ample evidence of the existence of bad feeling between the uncle and nephew. Mouton is witness of a violent scene between them; Cohen hears Meisner call his nephew a rascal; Marsal—a most relevant witness—testifies on the night of the murder Girard stigmatized his uncle as a 'cur,' and declared that he hated him.

"Christmas eve, the evening of the murder, is spent by Girard and Marsal at the Cafe de la Source. They leave the cafe together at a little before 10; at the head of the Rue Dauphine, where they reside, Girard quits his friend, saying that he has to pay a visit; 10 o'clock is striking as they separate. Girard goes straight to the Rue de l'Odéon, to the residence of his betrothed, Mlle. Dumaine; he remains with her, speaking on indifferent subjects, for a very short time, not more than five minutes. After Girard leaves Mlle. Dumaine there is no direct evidence as to his movements.

"It is now a little after 10 o'clock—about ten or fifteen minutes. About this time Police Sergeant Garnier, at his post in the Rue de Biche, is passed by a man of middling height and slimly made, who hastes in the direction of the Passage de Mazarin. The child Sophie Mouton sees the figure of a 'tallish, slenderly-built' man glide swiftly past her window toward the court of the house; it is, she thinks, at some time either a little before or a little after 10 that she sees this man pass. It is true that the evidence both of Garnier and of the child Sophie Mouton is indefinite with regard to time; but the evidence of the one supports that of the other. The Officer of Police Lambert has walked at a swift pace over the route followed by Girard on Monday night; it took him about thirteen minutes. So far as the question of time is concerned, the man who passed Garnier in the Rue de Biche and the man who was seen by Sophie Mouton at No. 13 Passage de Mazarin may therefore have been one and the same person; and that person may have been Raoul Girard, the accused.

"Beside the dead body of Meisner are found an ivory wrist-stick bearing an initial G., and a dagger with which the crime was committed. Girard, when arrested, is found to have at one wrist a button matching that found in Meisner's room; the button at the other wrist is gone. The Japanese dagger is a rarity; only one other like it has been found in Paris, in the famous private collection of M. de St. Florent. At one time, as has been proved by several witnesses, Girard had in his possession a dagger exactly resembling that found beside the corpse of Meisner. This weapon of Girard's was inclosed in a peculiar fan-shaped sheath, which has its counterpart in the sheath belonging to the dagger of M. de St. Florent. There is no proof that Girard ever parted with the dagger seen in his possession.

"In what way does Girard explain these circumstances, which combine so terribly to prove his guilt? The story which he tells is

perfectly connected. If his explanation breaks down, it will be from no contradiction in it, but simply from its essential incredibility.

"Girard declares that, swayed by a sudden impulse, he went on Monday night to demand money from his uncle; that he entered the room by the window, knowing that the janitor had orders not to admit him; and, having entered, found the corpse of Meisner lying in a pool of blood.

"If the story be set aside, there is but one other explanation of the circumstances. Girard and his uncle have quarrelled, and quarrelled violently; for a year they have not met. Spurred on by the want of money at the very time when the need of it was most pressing, Girard resolves on waiting his uncle's relative, to demand a gift or a loan; he himself says, the repayment of a debt. He takes with him his dagger; if entreaties are unavailing, he will threaten; he will use force.

"He enters the cabinet by the window, and Meisner's room through the cabinet. The marks on the trellis-work on the window-sill—the fact that the door of Meisner's room is found locked, and the key hanging in its accustomed place—bear out Girard's own statement.

"Opening the door of the cabinet, he sees his uncle seated before the writing-table. What follows can only be conjectured. It may be that the man who meant merely to threaten was suddenly tempted to kill, and smote his victim on the back without a word being spoken. Or hot words may have passed between uncle and nephew; there may have been a refusal to lend money; taunts and insults; the young man, enraged and excited, may have been roused to a burst of homicidal fury, and in this state have dealt the fatal blow. The former of these hypotheses is borne out by the medical and police theory that the deceased was struck suddenly from behind, and so fell dead or dying from his chair.

"In ascending the trellis-work Girard has rent his coat-sleeve and lacerated the stud at his wrist; the stud drops on the floor as he raises his arm, and there remains. The dagger be left half beside the body of his victim, when it has served its purpose.

"When the room of the murdered man is entered by the police all is found in confusion. Drawers are pulled out, cabinets opened or broken into, as if some one had rummaged through them in haste; yet portable articles of great intrinsic value, such as jewels and money, have been left behind. This is the obscure point of the case; but the difficulty here lies as forcibly against any theory of the crime as against the theory that Girard is the guilty person. There is one explanation that may or may not be deemed satisfactory. Mental excitement, accentuated by the horror that follows crime, will account for the most eccentric behavior. The murderer, completely unnerved, almost out of his senses for the time, may have gone on overturning everything and yet taking nothing; or, if he took up the spoils of blood to ransom them, the thought that they might lead to detection may have made him lay them down again. There is sufficient evidence as to the tumult of mind in which Girard passed the day subsequent to the murder.

"This is my theory of the crime, based on the evidence taken at the preliminary inquiry.

(Signed) ROBERT, Judge of Instruction.

CHAPTER IX.

The preliminary inquiry had ended; Raoul was in the house of detention, waiting his trial before the court of assizes; and, so far as I could learn, there were only two persons in all Paris who did not believe him guilty—Gabrielle Dumaine and myself.

I cannot tell you how grateful I felt to Mademoiselle Dumaine for having restored my confidence in Raoul before my evidence was given at the inquiry. But for that I should have been forced by the judge of instruction to become the accuser of my friend. No sooner had I seen in the journals the account given by Raoul himself of his connection with the affair than I recognized its perfect truthfulness. I congratulated myself that I had not waited for this explanation before declaring my belief in his innocence. Had I done so I felt that I could never have looked him in the face again.

After giving my evidence at the inquiry—an experience I should not like again to pass through—I went back to our old attic room in the Rue Dauphine. I wanted to be where everything would remind me of Raoul. I fancied that there, better than elsewhere, I would be able to do the thing that I had set my whole heart on doing. I avoided the cafes of the Latin Quarter in those days; they were full of talk about the crime of Christmas Eve, such talk as no friend of Raoul's would like to hear. Neither did I read the journals; they all of them accused Raoul's guilt as a thing of course. But before long the excitement caused by the murder of Meisner died away; a new ministry, a new drama, and a new domestic crime, occurring one after the other, threw the affair of the Passage de Mazarin into the shade. Popular interest in the case was, however, revived for a time by an announcement made in the Theatre. This journal stated that the administration of the Odéon had decided on bringing out at an early date Girard's comedy, called "Gold of Toulouse." The administration, it was said, saw no reason for suppressing a play of unusual merit because the writer of it chanced to be lying in prison on a charge of murder. Indeed, this latter fact, as one of the theatrical journals pointed out, would be certain to make the piece at least a pecuniary success.

Some days after the close of the inquiry I obtained permission to visit Raoul at the house of detention. The interview was much less painful to either of us than I had feared. Raoul would not let me speak of the wrong I had done him—he would not let me beg his forgiveness.

"What you thought," he said, "who could have helped thinking it? It was I who was to blame; I should have told you the truth at once; that I did not is the best proof to me that I must have been half-crazed at the time. No, no! It is not you who should speak of forgiveness; it is I. And you did not wait till I had heard my story—it needed only a word from Gabrielle to make you believe in me again!"

"Ah, if you had but heard her speak!" "I seem to hear her. You will go to her, Paul. You will tell her that you have seen me, that I am well and brave—no longer the miserable coward that terrible night made of me? You will tell her that?"

Of course I promised. Raoul had said no more than the truth. He was himself again; calm, courageous, looking his danger in the face with a firmness that inspired me. "It is a dreadful fatality," he said. "If you had seen how the judge wore his net of evidence about his neck, you might almost despair of ever unweaving it. Yet I believe it will be done."

"It shall be done," I answered; "you used to say I never thought, Raoul; but, believe me, of late I have been thinking for you."

"My friend!" he said, and pressed my hand.

"You will allow me to retain our friend Sapiand for your defense? I know no better man."

"By all means."

"And you will put your name to this document, which I have brought ready for signing?"

Raoul read the document: "I, Raoul Girard, hereby authorize Paul Marsal to offer a reward of twenty thousand francs to such per-

son as may discover the real murderer of Joseph Meisner."

"My dear Paul!" he said; "twenty thousand francs! You jest."



"Twenty thousand francs! You jest?"

"On the contrary, I was never more in earnest."

"But where is the money to come from?"

"From you?"

"It is you who are jesting now, Raoul. Leave it to me, like a good fellow. Sign your name, and take my word for it that I am asking you to do nothing wrong."

On this Raoul signed without further hesitation.

"I put myself in your hands," he said. "Nothing can make me more your friend than I am; but if you get me out of this frightful place—if you restore me, a free man once more, to Gabrielle—ah, Paul, what shall I do?"

His voice failed him; a hand-clasp said what much of it had to say. This was the one moment during our whole interview that Raoul showed the slightest want of composure. He recovered himself immediately.

Soon after I had to go, the duration of my visit being limited by the prison rules.

"Be patient, my friend," I said to him; "what has to be done will take time, and the time will seem doubly long to you. I do not say to be brave, for you are brave; but I say, be patient."

"I will be patient," he said. Looking back to the warden closed the door, I saw his eyes fixed wistfully upon me; the bells rang, and I left my friend in his prison.

After leaving the house of detention I went straight to the Palace of Justice, to see the advocate Sapiand and retain him for Raoul's defense. Sapiand was an intimate friend of mine, and knew Raoul well also. He was a fiery Meridional, an eloquent pleader, and a rapidly-growing reputation at the bar. Sapiand took up the case with enthusiasm. He promised to see Raoul on the morning, and in three days' time to make himself master of the evidence. I asked him to send me his copy of the judge's notes, which he engaged to do.

The next few days passed in comparative inaction. I went to see Gabrielle Dumaine. I found her very calm, like Raoul; but one could easily see how severely she had been tried by that cruel ordeal of the inquiry. All her vivacity was gone; her cheeks were pale, her movements languid; her dark eyes had ceased to shine. It would have wrung the heart of any man to see her with her mother. Mme. Dumaine had evidently no hope of Raoul's innocence ever being established; I believe that, in her heart, she even doubted whether he were innocent. Yet, for Gabrielle's sake, she had to feign the most perfect confidence that all would go well.

"And